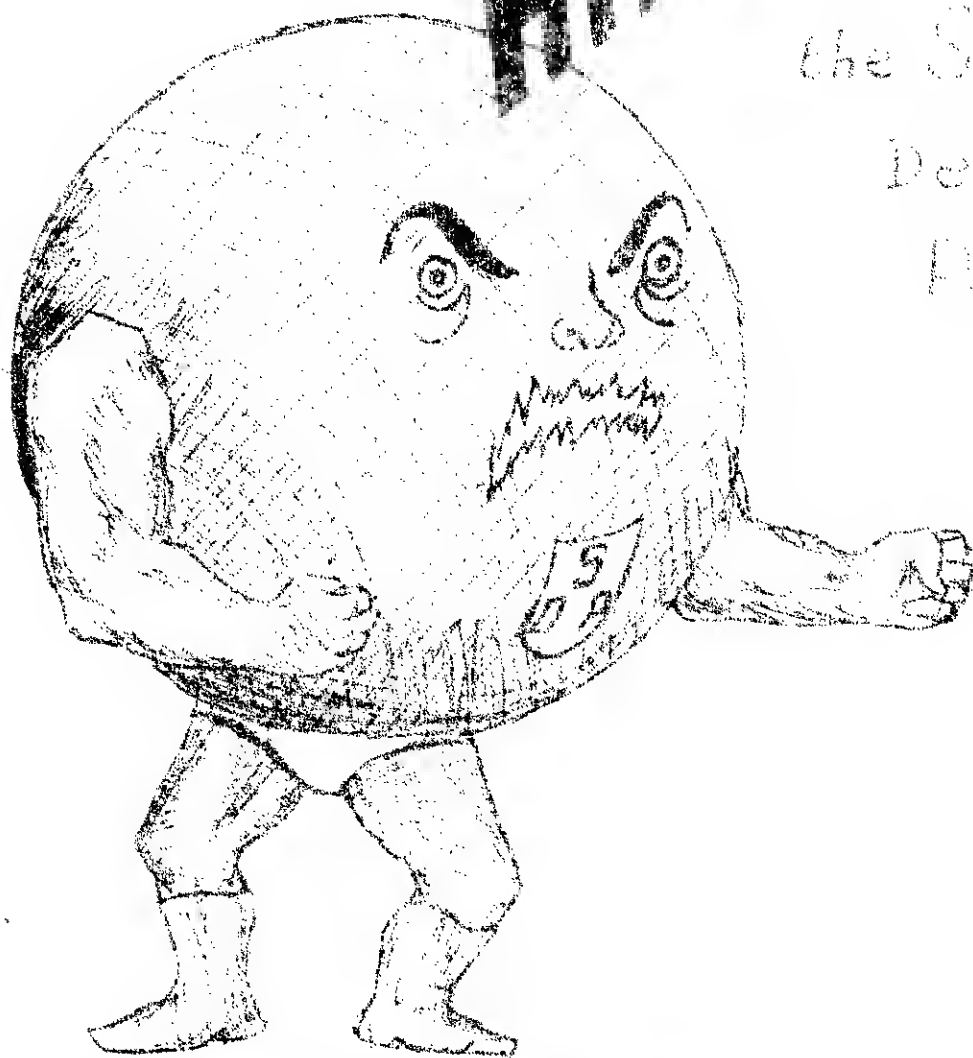


# ALBION

presents . . . . .

**RAAARCH!**

the SUPER  
Decimal  
Point



ALBION is a journal of board wargaming and allied interests. It is published on the first day of each month (except March 1971) at a subscription price of 10p per issue, plus appropriate postage costs. Postal Diplomacy games are reported in COURIER, the section of ALBION created solely for that purpose. Applications for places in Diplomacy games should be made to the editor - Don Turnbull, 6 St. George's Avenue, Timperley, Cheshire, England. The supply of games is a function of the demand. See the waiting list in this issue. Players awaiting a game are expected to subscribe to ALBION until the game starts (it's the only way ALBION keeps solvent). Players involved in a game receive both ALBION and COURIER free, having paid the game fee, until such time as either they are eliminated or the game ends; they pay postage costs throughout.

ALBION is a member of the NFFF Games Bureau Diplomacy Division. Diplomacy is a game manufactured and marketed by Games Research Inc., 48 Wareham Street, Boston, Mass. 02118, U.S.A. It can be obtained from various stockists in England - see the stockist list in this issue, to which further contributions are invited. Please mention ALBION when writing to a stockist of the game.

Contributions to ALBION are welcome. Please submit as far in advance of publication date as possible.

The editor would like to make it clear that he does not necessarily share the opinions of contributors as expressed in articles or letters. He also gives fair warning to readers not to take the editorial meanderings too seriously.

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The AHIKS British Region Members' Bulletin for April 1971 is attached to the rear of this issue. This is done in order to give non-members an idea of the activities of AHIKS.

The front cover is by R. Emerson. The cartoon at the rear is by George Forster. To both these people, who continue to supply excellent material on time and without too much grumbling, our usual thanks.

EDITORIAL of sorts.

HerrrrrrrrHummmmm.

"Spring is sprung - the grass is ris;  
I wonder where de boidies is?"  
"De boid is on de wing."  
"But dat's absoid -  
De wing is on de boid!"

(ANON - and just as well too).

With which erudite pisce of writing - typifying the ALBION habit of double-talk - we greet our readers after what might be termed a hiatus. Other less polite observers have been known to describe the British postal strike otherwise.....

You will all havs guessed, by now, that there was no March ALBION. I supposs I could have producsd an issue, but it would havs been written almost entirsly by me, and it would have been too much to inflict upon you all in addition to the pain of the postal strike. So there will be a gap in the history of this most awful magazine.

Response to my impassioned editorial last time was quite rsmarkable. I got quite a few letters criticising my views on the postal workers, saying that thsir strike was quite justified etc. Mind you, I don't recall saying it wasn't justified - all I did was to poke a bit of harmless fun. However it all goes to show what happens. Critical rsaders should know by now that any non-games material in this magazine is written strictly with tongus in cheek, and you won't catch ms taking a political stance on anything unless it is intentionally barbed. My vIEWS on strikes are no concern of yours, nor should you be interested in thsm anyway, since we try to be a wargaming (plus) community in ALBION.

Response to my plea for articles has produced something, and I am glad to announce that I now have two or three surplus articles saved for future issues of ALBION. However this doesn't mean you should stop sending me your contributions - that's the way to maks my job mors difficult. Lst's have your views on anything game-related.

By the way, you will find an snclousure with this issue. Apart from the copy of COURIER, that is. This is a game flyer circulated on bshalf of Hartlsy Patterson, who is one of the War Bulletin community (this being the magazine edited by David Berg). From what I can ses, I have around 50 copies, so most people should get one; priority will be given to English subscribers, for obvious reasons, although most of ths overseas readers will probably find a blue piece of paper tucked away somewhere.

It's nice to see (later this issue) that the U.K. Abstraction game is getting off the ground. I hope it proves intresting for players and spectators aliks, and particularly to the inventor, Fred Davis.

The subscribr list continues to grow, and I am rather conscious of ths fact that, buried under the pils of mail which always accumulats around publication day, thsre must be a few more requests for copies of ALBION past and prssnt. I haven't printed a set of accounts for some time now, having been scared rigid by the last lot. However, when the matter does come up for review, we might even find that ALBION is breaking even. Quesn's Award For Industry, here we come!

Don Turnbull.

Postal Diplomacy to date.

\*\*\* The sources of information for this article are many and varied. However it should be mentioned that the motivation for writing it was supplied by SerenDip, John McCallum's excellent magazine, which has also provided many of the facts herein. djt\*\*\*

To find out how postal Diplomacy first started, we need to consider another 'cult' whose origins are even more deeply buried - Science Fiction Fandom. Fandom consists of communication between people interested in Science Fiction and other forms of fantasy, involving the publication of magazines, the organising of world-wide conventions, the presentation of awards similar to the Oscar of the film industry, and other activities in addition to letter-writing and the avid collection of books. The cult is so sizeable and widespread as to have attained international status many years ago; literally hundreds of magazines have been produced in various countries - indeed Don Miller has a large basement stacked with magazines, some going back to the 1920s, yet he bemoans the fact that there are some he has missed.

The first World Science Fiction Convention was held in New York in 1939; the grandiose title could mislead - about 200 people attended this convention, most of them teenagers and virtually all from the U.S.A. Nevertheless the popularity of the venture is proved by the fact that conventions have been organised every year since then, with a short break for World War II. The 15th Convention was held in London in 1957 - the first time the Convention had moved outside the U.S.A., but not the last.

Despite considerable international popularity of fandom, it is within the U.S.A. that the cult still reigns supreme, perhaps for the good reason that many of the best Science Fiction authors are American - surely everyone has heard of Azimov! It is not surprising, therefore, as we shall see, that postal Diplomacy also had its origins in the U.S.A., and that America can be regarded as the centre of operations.

Without going into too many details of fandom, suffice it to say that lines of communication between people of like interest have been open for many years, just as they have with postal chess players; since Diplomacy-by-mail is also based on speedy communication by mail, and since it is also a hobby appealing (dare it be said?) to the escapists among us, it is perhaps logical that postal Diplomacy should have started life among the Science Fiction fans. In addition to this, the concept of 'history in flux' has no doubt appealed to Science Fiction adherents to the concept of parallel universes. Indeed the notion of two co-existent parallel 'earths' has already been used in at least one game, based on Diplomacy and played in one of the leading current Diplomacy magazines.

Diplomacy (not by mail at this stage) started to attract followers in fan circles in the early 1960s; this apparently happened almost simultaneously in New York and in Los Angeles, although there seems to have been little, if any, contact between the two groups. The fal caught on with a vengeance, and every meeting of the Los Angeles Science Fiction Society had one or more games of Diplomacy.

Unlike many fads, however, Diplomacy stood the test of time, and continued to attract more and more players: word spread around the Science Fiction fan communities, and if you wanted to play Diplomacy in those days, you merely had to join the local Science Fiction Society. No-one seems to have thought of playing the game by mail, however, for two years or so.

John Boardman published the first GRAUSTARK in May 1963. Although this was not, strictly, the first postal Diplomacy magazine published (Conrad von Metzke produced a postal Diplomacy newsletter, untitled, in 1962, relating to a game which was never completed), GRAUSTARK has been published regularly ever since, and can be regarded as having started the whole ball rolling in earnest. At the time John was already publishing a Science Fiction Fan journal, and made the offer, in the journal, to run and report a postal Diplomacy game if enough support was shown. The support was there, and since then John has produced over 200 issues of GRAUSTARK; the magazine has been the most regularly produced of any, and John himself can realistically be regarded as one of the most important contributors to postal Diplomacy.

With one or two exceptions (including Allan Calhamer, the inventor of the game) it appears that all postal Diplomacy players in the early days were Science Fiction fans, and for several years postal Diplomacy remained a sort of offspring of fandom.

Wargamers were not out in the cold, however, and it seems safe to guess that over-the-board Diplomacy games were taking place, in the early '60s, in the meetings of wargame societies, both those playing table-top games and (more likely to appeal) those firmly entrenched in Avalon Hill games, which have now been marketed for upwards of a decade. No postal Diplomacy journals seem to have been published by wargame groups - the requirement that it takes two players to make a wargame must have a bearing on this - and the game apparently remained 'in person' for some time.

It was not until late 1965 that the two groups began to be aware of each other in the Diplomacy context; efforts were made to forge a link between the two factions, and John McCallum, then the publisher of BROEDINGNAG, sent a large number of copies of one issue of the magazine to players advertising in the Avalon Hill General for postal wargame opponents. Many of those who responded were already aware of Diplomacy, but didn't realise that journals were produced to report on the progress of postal games. Others were no doubt pleased to hear of another interesting branch of their hobby.

One of those who did reply was Chris Wagner, who at the time was mentally girding his loins in preparation for the publication of the first issue of Strategy and Tactics, intended to be a general wargaming magazine. As a result, the ranks of postal Diplomacy players suddenly increased, and a fresh crop of magazines started in publication. Strategy and Tactics magazine ran a 'Diplomacy Special Issue' in 1967, and the regular Diplomacy column, written by Rod Walker, started immediately afterwards and has continued ever since.

Thus the two groups converged to form what many people know as the 'mainstream' of postal Diplomacy.

However it should not be assumed that postal Diplomacy sprang only from these two main branches - the Science Fiction Fans and the Wargamers. A number of prominent Diplomacy personalities belonged to neither group - John McCallum for instance. As the mainstream of postal Diplomacy became more and more established, various other groups, who were running Diplomacy games independently (either face-to-face or via journals) were discovered and combined into the mainstream.

Magazines built up at a fast and furious pace after 1965. My sources of reference indicate some scores of titles, many of which have since fallen by the wayside.

The build-up in magazines need not entirely be due to the popularity of the game itself. It has been said that postal Diplomacy magazine publishers, like Science Fiction fandom magazine publishers, are frustrated would-be journalists; if they were not publishing postal Diplomacy magazines, they would be writing something else. Thus, right from the start, we have two types of postal Diplomacy magazine -- the magazine which merely reports on games, and that which also carries other articles, either Diplomacy-related or otherwise. Personality imprints distinguish one of the latter type of magazine from another, and I suspect it is possible, from a pile of untitled pages selected at random from postal Diplomacy magazines, to pick out the pages written by Rod Walker, those written by Don Miller, those written by John McCallum etc. Much of the pleasure of receiving postal Diplomacy magazines from other publishers lies in the extraneous reading matter, apart from game reports in which the reader is more or less interested or involved.

Some Diplomacy magazine publishers also produce other magazines relating to other subjects; Don Miller, for instance, publishes magazines on games (not only wargames), on science fiction, etc. and also leads the Games Bureau. To my certain knowledge, Charles Wells has produced a magazine called TRILL, which collects his writings on a variety of topics, not necessarily Diplomacy. I cannot believe that Charles is the only Diplomacy publisher also to produce a magazine of personal miscellany, since the amateur publishing business is remarkably addictive.

Controversies have played major parts in the history of postal Diplomacy; perhaps none have been so widely discussed and debated as those concerned with interpretation of the Diplomacy rulebook. This document, now in the process of being re-written after much pressure from players, has been the subject of hot debate and (sometimes bitter) argument. The rationale was that, with many postal Diplomacy games being run in a variety of different magazines, the rules should be standardised to the extent that a player can play in as many different magazines as he liked without having to adapt his ideas of the rules from game to game, to fit the interpretations of different gamesmasters. Such standardisation has been assisted by organisations, created partially with this purpose in mind, such as the NFFF Games Bureau Diplomacy Division. However most rule interpretations which are now regarded as standard have emanated from individual magazines, and hence certain rulings have attached to them the name of the player or gamesmaster who made the original interpretation. This has the effect of carving a niche in history for certain prominent personalities of the postal Diplomacy scene -- Koning's rule, Miller's rule, the Boardman dilemma, etc. Strangely enough, there is no McCallum's rule, although John has recently proposed a new method of retreating unordered units, which this magazine at least has adopted, and the McCallum Retreat Rule will probably take its place with the others.

One problem which has faced the postal Diplomacy mainstream for some time arises from this discovery of hitherto unknown Diplomacy groups. As these groups are uncovered, and introduced to the mainstream, it has sometimes been found that they have adopted rulings radically different from those of the mainstream, thus providing a problem in standardisation difficult to resolve.

For example, one group of Diplomacy players was discovered a few years ago who incorporated the Spring Raid into their rules, whereby a supply centre could be captured in the Spring season. Thus, if a unit moved into a non-friendly supply centre in Spring, then moved out again in Autumn, the supply centre was removed from the control of the original owner, although the country whose unit was in occupation in Spring could not build for the centre.

Again, if a unit is attacked in a surrounded situation, and is removed from the board by virtue of having no legal retreat, the normal ruling is that the unit may be rebuilt in the next Winter season (an invention of postal Diplomacy players) providing the supply centre count permits it. However the Scarborough Diplomacy Club (not Yorkshire, but - I think - in Canada) played a game in which a unit lost in this manner could not be replaced, and the player concerned was a unit short for the rest of the game, despite his supply centre count. Dick Schultz, back in 1964, also thought that this was a rule of the game. John McCallum, writing about this in BRODINGNAG 84, wonders 'if such a rule may have been included in an earlier, pre-commercial version of the game and later dropped'.

These, and other similar differences of opinion (in many cases, unlike the above, the rulebook serves little guiding function) have made it difficult to standardise postal Diplomacy games, and the problems are still not fully resolved. The re-writing of the Games Research rulebook, shortly to be an accomplished fact after spending many years as an earnest desire, will do much to settle areas of disagreement, providing the new version is adequately circulated, and providing gamesmasters are willing to accept it even if it declares as illegal rulings which they have used for some time.

Since the first postal Diplomacy game ended, gamesmasters and players have been interested in producing rating systems - mathematical devices which enable Diplomacy players to be rated on a universal scale. Such rating systems have been many and varied; simple systems, which merely allocate specific points for a win, second place, etc., have in some magazines given way to more complicated (and, in the opinion of some, over-complicated) systems, which take into account, for example, the country which the player represented, the length of time he survived, etc.

An explanation of every rating system would be out of place in this article. However the following extract, from EREHWON III 3 will illustrate the lengths to which gamesmasters are prepared to go in order to get a (hopefully) realistic rating of players.

'In a completed game (7 players) the score is computed on this basis: the winner receives 10 points, the largest survivor 5 points, all other survivors 3 points. Of those eliminated, those surviving past 1910 receive 2 points, and those surviving past 1905 receive 1 point. All others receive 0. Bonus points are awarded: 2 for a growth rate of 1.5+ supply centres per game year, 1 for a growth rate of 1.0+ centres per game year. Parties to a 2-way tie receive 7 points each; parties to a 3-way or 4-way tie receive 5 points each. Scores for completed and active games (there is another system for computing a player's rating in a game which is still going on) are added together for each player and averaged to three decimal places.'

Another system (which I think was originated by John McCallum) depends on the overall ruling 'each player gains a point from each player whose play was inferior to his own, and loses a point to each player whose play was better'. The system thus runs from +6 for the winner to -6 for the first player eliminated.

Yet another system is based on the frequency with which each country has won previous finished games. Thus a player who wins with Austria, say, should get greater credit for his victory than one who wins with Turkey, and the rating system is adjusted according to a 'country factor' with this in mind.

Analyses of rating systems, and comments on their individual values, are out of place here. It seems fair comment to observe, however, that no matter which rating system one consults, John Smythe always appears at the north end. John, of Lincoln, Nebraska, is the most consistent winner in postal Diplomacy to date, having won one game for every three in which he has played.

The sources of some postal Diplomacy magazines are interesting. Sometimes, in a postal Diplomacy game, press releases are written by players and printed in the game report by the gamesmaster. These can be historical in flavour, the player attempting to produce a realistic release such as would be issued at the time; they can be frankly comic, the player giving vent to his own particular brand of humour; they can even be slanderous, one player hurling abuse at others. Sometimes these press releases get so large that they take the form of individual magazines in their own right, in which case the player himself would do the printing to save the gamesmaster the work, and would ask the gamesmaster to distribute the magazine with the game report.

One case in point is THE VOICE, now a Diplomacy magazine in its own right, which started life as THE VOICE OF VIENNA, an Austrian propaganda leaflet published by Jeff Key when he was playing that country in a postal game. Jeff has since expanded THE VOICE into a general Diplomacy magazine which reports on games etc., although recent illness has apparently kept Jeff away from the typewriter.

Another example is DEUTSCHLAND, published by Dieter Cordes when playing Germany in a recent, and still current game. Whether Dieter has plans for expanding DEUTSCHLAND into a general magazine I don't know - perhaps he hasn't the time since he was elected AHIKS treasurer.

In postal Diplomacy some magazines go on for ever, while there is the predictable crop of magazines which are published for a few issues, then fall by the wayside when the editor moves on to another hobby, or finds out just how much work is involved, or both. In such cases, the situation often arises that games, which were being played in a magazine which ceases publication, become orphans; the players have paid a game fee and are naturally interested in continuing. Magazines have been formed with the sole intention of seeing such games through to their conclusion, one such being VIMY VICTORS, published at one time by John McCallum to report the progress of game 1967AJ, which started in a magazine called JUTLAND JOLLIES. 1967AJ, incidentally, was a Smythe win in August 1969, when VIMY VICTORS ceased publication, its job done.



Some Diplomacy magazines (about 25%) have followed a 'tradition' of taking as their title the name of a country appearing in a work of fiction. Some examples are:-

ATLANTIS published by Rod Walker since 1968, taken over by Chris Schleicher.

BARAD-DUR published by Jack Chalker, then transferred to Don Miller.

BLEFESCU published by Rod Walker.

BROBDINGNAG published first by Dick Schultz, then by John McCallum, now by Ed Halle (and apparently seeking yet another publisher).

EREHWON published by Rod Walker.

GRAND FENWICK GAZETTE published by Charles Wells.

THULCANDRA published by Terry Kuch, now a sub-magazine of Charles Wells.

LONELY MOUNTAIN, which itself might cease publication soon.

UTOPIA published by Rod Walker.

VALHALLA published by John Koning until 1969. Now part of STAB.

Some magazines have been as well known for their humour as for their game reporting. One such was the INTERNATIONAL ENQUIRER, published by Cliff Ollila, which included such Diplomacy-unrelated material as The Adventures Of The Whistling Rapist, Dr. Barnacle And The Banana Fiends, etc. Rod Walker's EREHWON was most amusing in the early days, when Rod published from Rantoul, Illinois; at present his time is at a premium, but there are signs that EREHWON will soon again reach its former standards of hilarity.

A complete chronological history of Diplomacy magazines would probably be impossible to assemble. In addition it might be of only passing interest, since a high proportion of magazines have commenced publication with zest and enthusiasm only to founder within a short space of time. However it might be of interest to assemble comments on the history of the more significant magazines and/or publishers - the papers and people around which and whom postal Diplomacy has grown up.

GRAUSTARK presents no difficulty. Now well past its 200th issue, it has been published regularly (two-weekly, or thereabouts) by John Boardman since May 1963. At times John's political comments in the magazine have aroused criticism; at times one wonders how firmly his tongue is in his cheek when writing. Whatever the views on his politics, the fact remains that John, and GRAUSTARK, have done as much for postal Diplomacy as any other magazine/publisher combination, and more than most.

The second oldest continuous Diplomacy magazine in publication is BROBDINGNAG. It was originated in 1964 by Dick Schultz; the first game, curiously enough, was won by John Boardman playing England. It is gaining a reputation for using up publishers faster than they can be found.

EREHWON started in 1966 under the guiding hand of Rod Walker. It was at one time both very funny and very authoritative, although the first quality has been rather lacking recently. Rod's contribution to postal Diplomacy has also been tremendous - he heads the Diplomacy Division of the NFFG Games Bureau, and has been most active in getting the rulebook re-written. This humble magazine in which this article appears owes a considerable debt to Rod (among others) for his guiding hand in the early days, and his example in EREHWON. It must be mentioned that Rod's account of the Youngstown Convention was one of the funniest things I have read in a Diplomacy magazine.

DIPLOMANIA started publication in February 1966 under the guiding hand of Don Miller. After issue 11 it split into five magazines, DIPLOMANIA itself remaining in publication purely as a magazine of information, in which format it is still published. It is possibly the best source of comprehensive Diplomacy information yet published, and is certainly the only magazine to have introduced a whole host of variants on the game of Diplomacy. It has a most active letter column, in which appear discussions on rulings, rating systems, etc. The four magazines which were given life by DIPLOMANIA were DIPLOPHOBIA, DIPSOMANIA, FANTASIA and SUPERCALIFRAGILISTICEXPIALIDOCIOUS. To which were later added BARAD-DUR, LIMBO, ASTRA and others in profusion. Don's policy was to publish separate magazines according to the types of games played therein, since only a small proportion of his games were 'regular', the rest being variants, principally of his own invention. Thus in DIPLOPHOBIA there were regular games and team games; DIPSOMANIA carried variant games using the map of Europe, while variants using other maps were reported in FANTASIA; SUPERCAL..... carried the Game Of Anarchy and Hypereconomic Diplomacy (a real monster of a variant).

DIPLOMANIA has for some time been a most authoritative source of comment and discussion on the game of Diplomacy, and Don himself has contributed a great deal to games in general and to Diplomacy in particular. Don is Chairman of the NFFF Games Bureau.

sTab was published by John Koning in 1966 and is still going strong. The title is usually printed with a gory dagger in the place of the letter T, thus effectively giving comment on the contents. For a number of years one of the most important Diplomacy centres was Youngstown University, where John Koning and John Smythe formed the Youngstown University Diplomacy Club. John Koning has been another regular and interesting contributor to the postal Diplomacy archives.

LONELY MOUNTAIN started in 1965, published by Charles Wells. More recently Charles has adopted the policy of heading an editorial staff of five, each editor producing his own sub-magazine; the five magazines are combined and mailed together under the title LONELY MOUNTAIN. This magazine has the added distinction of being the first to report on postal games of Parlement, a political game invented by Charles.

BIG BROTHER started publication in February 1966 and ceased in 1969 after exactly 100 issues. The publisher was Charles Reinsel, who used to publish as regularly as GRAUSTARK - about 13 days between moves in the games. Charles clearly set himself a target of 100 and stuck to it - a determined approach which could well be emulated by some of the publishers of inconstant and irregular magazines today.

John McCallum, whose name appears frequently in any account of aspects of postal Diplomacy, has published a large number of magazines during his long association with postal Diplomacy. BROBDINGNAG, ACELDAMA and LAURANIA are but three; he is currently publishing SerenDip and has reserved the titles PFENNIG-HALB-PFENNIG and MATHEISIS for future (and possible) publication.

It is perhaps cheeky to mention here that ALBION was, as far as we know, the first postal Diplomacy magazine to be published outside the U.S.A.

Some interesting facts about postal Diplomacy games have emerged over the years. The shortest game on record, not including games which have failed to finish due to various factors such as waning interest on the part of the players and/or gamesmaster, ran to a draw in 1905. The longest game on record was 1967U, which was won by Italy in Autumn 1928 (game time)! The average game finishes in 1911 or 1912, as far as I can judge. The idea of programming a computer to determine the best moves to play was first used in 1963A, the first postal game; the player concerned was eliminated in 1903, which proves once again that a computer is only as good as the person who gives it the information.

Postal Diplomacy is now truly an international hobby. Records show that there are players in the U.S.A., Canada, England, Scotland, Israel, South Africa and probably many other countries. There seems no reason why this expansion should not be continued all over the world, and the time cannot be far away when a postal Diplomacy game is played by people from the actual seven countries concerned.

Many people regard postal Diplomacy as an extraordinarily fine hobby - to the extent that some players are currently involved in upwards of twenty games in different magazines. As a means whereby international communication can be obtained it is an ideal hobby - contact with other players in an international game can be most rewarding, assuming the players indulge in ordinary correspondence in addition to planning common strategy in the game. The game allows everyone the opportunity of writing and of expressing their own particular viewpoint, not only by normal correspondence but also by means of press releases and/or publishing their own magazine. It is a hobby particularly suitable to those who, for reasons of ill-health, are not able to live what we might term a 'normal' life. Providing there is access to a Diplomacy map and a typewriter (or paper and ink), and providing for a reasonable amount of tact and ordinary common sense, anyone can play postal Diplomacy and reap the benefits inherent in communication with others of like interest (but perhaps completely differing philosophies, which makes it all the more interesting). The game promotes interest in writing, in history, in politics, economics, technology and logic. In short, it is a starting point for a whole gamut of allied interests, and we owe a considerable debt to those who, by their pioneering and example, have made postal Diplomacy what it is today.

Calhamer, Boardman, McCallum, Walker, Miller, Koning, etc. - we salute you!

Don Turnbull.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### Diplomacy Stockists.

We asked readers to help us in compiling a list of shops which stock the game of Diplomacy, in order to assist potential purchasers of the game (who could then be persuaded to subscribe to this awful magazine). Our thanks to Stuart Clark for letting me know of the Liverpool stockist below.

Hewitts Ltd., 25-29 King Street, Knutsford, Cheshire.

Precision Models Ltd., Bold Street, Liverpool 1.

STRATEGY AND TACTICS - a report on Issue 24.

This issue is dated November-December 1970, and sells at a cover price of \$2.50 (although regular subscribers pay less). The issue reached my desk in late December, so it looks as though the publishers, Poultron Press, are now working to schedule. This means in turn that issue 25, at least, should already be available and on its way over here, and that issue 26 won't be far away.

Presentation is of the usual high quality, and this issue is considerably enhanced by a very striking cover photograph of an artillery piece in 'close-up'.

Taking the articles in batting order, we have:

1. Outgoing Mail. The S&T editorial. At least one, and possibly two, new magazines are to be published by Poultron Press. The two titles are GAME DESIGN and DIPLOMACY. GAME DESIGN, which should be published at the time of writing this magazine, will contain articles by Al Nofi (on TAC14), Jim Dunnigan (on new innovations in design), a Test Series Game Review, and others. It is awaited here with eager anticipation, and will be reviewed in these pages when it arrives.

DIPLOMACY is still at the 'shall we?' stage. No further explanation of the contents is necessary, I think. Perhaps it might fairly be remarked that there are already plenty of good Diplomacy magazines on the market, many written by people more experienced in the game than the Poultron Press staff (although they might have signed up Rod Walker, of course.....)

Poultron are going into the commercial games market with a vengeance. They anticipate that they will be producing something like three new titles a year, of which Panzer Blitz could be called the first. For the benefit of those who don't know, PanzerBlitz was designed etc. entirely by Poultron Press (Jim Dunnigan et al) while Avalon Hill, as far as I can gather, merely did the printing runs and the marketing. Whether Poultron intend to continue operating with AH in this way they don't say. The commercial games will be produced in addition to the regular output of Test Series Games and games appearing as part of Strategy and Tactics magazine, the only difference being in quality and presentation.

2. Artillery on the Western Front by Edward G. Weinstein. A well-written article, profusely illustrated with photographs, diagrams and charts. An interesting piece of work, particularly for the would-be designer of a WWI game.
3. If Looks Could Kill, the regular column by Red Simonsen. Red concerns himself this time, not with artwork, presentation, or any of his usual line of business, with a new possibility for a combat results system, which he calls Results System Variant : Cards. (In the way apparently beloved of all Americans, this of course becomes the RSVC). The system employs a prepared deck of special cards in place of a die roll; to my mind, it doesn't seem to have any particular advantage over current systems. Gimmiesty, is our verdict. After all, two dice gives a very wide latitude of combat

results, if you want the additional latitude - there's no reason to produce special cards. Strangely enough, no designer has yet thought it necessary to employ a two-dice combat results table in order to take advantage of the wider scope of a two-dice frequency distribution, with the single exception of Roger Cormier in his Trafalgar game. Certainly there seems little point in making sets of cards when you could just add another die and amend the normal combat results table accordingly; in addition, we don't want card-sharps in wargames - we have enough troubles already.

4. GAGE review of PanzerBlitz. The S&T staff take great pains to point out that they have tried to avoid bias in the review, since the design originated from Poultron Press. Perhaps the high ratings they award are justified by the game - I have no means of telling since my copy of the game has fallen foul of rank stupidity on both sides of the Atlantic, and hasn't yet emerged from the postal mess caused by Hairy Tom.  
The GAGE system strikes me as a good idea, on the whole, although it must be admitted that, of the reviews we have seen so far, the Test Series Games seem to be more favourably treated than Avalon Hill products. This may be justified, or it may merely be that members of the S&T review staff want to be sure of knowing where the next crust is coming from.
5. Flying Tigers by Lou Zocchi. This is a campaign survey on which the Test Series Game of the same title was based. An interesting and informative article, well written and presented.
6. Pass In Review. The S&T book column. This issue deals with books on naval warfare.
7. Diplomacy, the regular column by Rod Walker. Rod deals with the formation of alliances in postal Diplomacy games with his usual skill and good sense.
8. Games, the regular column by Sid Sackson. Aimed at the Christmas shoppers (Wow! That seems a long long time ago!) the article deals with some of the 'high points' of the game market, mentioning six or seven games of unusual concept and intellectual appeal. Some excellent photos illustrate the text.
9. Wargamers' Notebook by Ray Johnson. This is the miniatures section, in which Ray deals with the writing of rules for wargames. Some good advice for table-top designers here.
10. Incoming Mail, the S&T letter column. Nothing much of interest this time, in my view, except a deserved condemnation of past issues of S&T for using bad language, slick phrases and flippant attitudes, written by Brian Libby. Good on yer, Brian mate - I recall that one ALBION review made exactly the same points, and it's good to see we aren't on our own.

It is only fair to remark, in this context, that the last two or three issues of S&T have been free from the 'in' phrases, bad and tasteless language etc., after a spate of such material. As Eric Slack remarks, the use of bad language in a magazine argues a paucity of language and a careless indifference to the opinions of those who find this sort of thing distasteful.

Special Game Feature.

In the best tradition, we have reserved mention of perhaps the best feature of S&T 24 until last. This is the inclusion of a complete new game, designed by Dave Williams, called The Battle Of Moscow. Components and map are by Ken Palatori.

The game itself is the subject of a separate report in this issue of ALBION. However we should point out here that the game is complete, with rules, mapsheet and unit counter sheet.

Overall comment.

We were slightly disappointed with S&T 23, mainly on the grounds that there was too much of the 'campaign analysis' type of article, and too little material which might be regarded as having more general appeal. There was the additional disappointment that S&T23 did not contain a new game, at least a new game of the type which interests board wargames adherents.

There is still quite a lot of campaign analysis in S&T 24; however there is quite a lot of 'general interest' material, and we think the balance is just about right, particularly bearing in mind the inclusion of the new game. Whatever your interest in the wargames field, this issue should suit you.

\* \* \* \* \*

ALBION Game Review Number 13.

THE BATTLE OF MOSCOW.

Published in Strategy and Tactics magazine issue 24, which sells for a cover price of £2.50.

Designer: Dave Williams (already well known for the Avalon Hill ANZIO, and for ANZIO BEACHHEAD and THE FLIGHT OF THE GOEBEN which have appeared in previous issues of S&T).

Map and components by Ken Palatori.

Presentation.

The black and white mapsheet, the rules, and the coloured unit counter sheet are loose with issue 24 of S&T.

The mapsheet should be coloured and mounted, to make a suitable playing surface. The design is nice and clean - perhaps influenced in design by Red Simonsen. The unit counter sheet should be stuck onto suitable card, then cut into individual counters using a sharp knife.

One rather annoying feature about the unit counters is in the choice of letter face for the combat factor numerals. I don't know the name of the face, but you have to look carefully to distinguish between a 5 and a 3; since the Russian has both 3-3 and 5-3 infantry units, this can be confusing. Combat factors are functional, the design and styling of counters being of secondary importance, and a clear letter face should be given absolute priority in design.

The mapsheet is in the usual S&T style. For my part, it seems a pity that they persistently colour the sea areas black, when the clear delineation of the coast line would serve the purpose just as well. For one thing, large black areas must infuriate the printers when running off a few maps for, say, Korea, which is almost entirely surrounded by black areas; these areas use up more ink than the rest, which can presumably throw the system out of its normal mode of operation. From the player's point of view, the method has two disadvantages. First, and particularly for the postal player, the grid for postal play has to be laid out using white Letraset, rather than the usual black, and white Letraset isn't so easy to get hold of. However the second difficulty is more valid still; when there is a possible potential use of the sea squares (as in this game where sea areas freeze in the winter and become normal terrain) the actual hexagons should be visible, which of course isn't the case if the whole sea area is black. Perhaps a minor point, but one which could be dealt with.

One other comment, on this particular game. Initial Russian dispositions are, for the most part, of specific units on specific hexagons. To cope with this, twenty or so hexagons on the mapsheet are lettered with grey letters; since some are in cities, these tend to be difficult to find. When the map is coloured, the grey letters tend to merge even more with the background. Why didn't the designer put a postal grid straight onto the map at the printing stage? This would have made the initial placement quite simple, and would have saved postal wargamers the trouble of putting a grid on themselves. Apart from the fact that, in a widespread postal wargaming community, different people could be inventing different grids, which only makes matters worse. OK - so only a small proportion of wargamers play through the mail and need gridreferences. But ALBION goes principally to players of postal wargames, and they are the ones for whom this report is written. Another minor point, but one which could so easily be corrected.

### The Rules.

The designer, in an introductory article, states that he kept broadly to the popular Avalon Hill format in the rules, including some of the better features of the Test Series Games rules. As is the case with Dave Williams' other games, the rules are clear and comprehensive; we found no difficulties with them.

Movement is on a two-impulse system, with the slight modification that supplied units, which can move in the second impulse, can attack again at the end of the second impulse as well as at the end of the first. Combat is induced by normal zones of control, the results table being simple yet effective.

Forts and half-forts give additional defensive advantages to the Russian (as if the Russian needs any more advantage!) and are manned by special fortress and/or worker units, with defensive ability only.

An interesting innovation is the creation of partisan units. When a Russian unit is eliminated by virtue of being retreated, but without having a legal retreat route, the original unit is lost but a partisan unit is created.

The partisans have little power, but serve to clog up the German advance. In addition, no matter how many units attack them, the maximum odds is 3-1, so that the German runs considerable risk of losing units through exchanges if he uses regular units to attack partisans. The German does

have some Security Troops, which are only useful for attacking partisans; however these are slow-movers, and the German may find difficulty in getting security troops up to the front line, while yet reserving his railroad movement capacity for more important and useful regular units. We liked the partisan rules very much.

Supply rules are simple and realistic. There are three states of supply - supplied, not supplied, and isolated - each carrying its disadvantages to the unit(s) affected.

Other rulings are of Avalon Hill type.

#### The Play.

Speedy, interesting and exciting. The game is only ten turns long, although there is provision for expanding the game for a further ten turns, each turn being one week in 'game time'.

In this short space of time, the German has either to isolate Leningrad and Moscow for four turns in succession, or capture Moscow and hold it. These objectives are, to say the least, difficult, particularly bearing in mind our old friend the Russian replacement rate. However the Russian, in order to win, must be the last to pass through every city on the board, and this is no mean feat even against a German weakened by considerable losses.

All in all we expect most games to end in a draw, and perhaps a points system would help to differentiate between a draw in favour of the Russian and one in favour of the German.

The main difficulties, at least initially, are all for the Germans to solve. It helps the Germans a lot to capture Leningrad early in the game, for three reasons - first because this would release the Finns (who otherwise remain impotent unless the Russian is stupid enough to leave a hole in his lines), second because it reduces the Russian replacement rate, and third because this enables the German to fight a one-front battle. However to capture Leningrad the German must risk a considerable series of low-odds attacks, which could easily cripple him for the rest of the action. The capture of Leningrad must be done early in the game, if it is to be attempted at all, since the Russians build up pretty rapidly in the city, and eventually its capture will be well-nigh impossible.

The Germans must also advance quickly on Moscow; apart from the fact that hordes of Russians are in the way (and they appear almost as quickly as they are eliminated), the famous Russian weather slows down the German advance more effectively than anything Russia can produce in the way of men and machines.

The only solution, as we see it, is for the German to make a rapid advance by encircling Russian forces, rather than attacking them directly. There are two main reasons for this - first because all but the most overwhelming attacks carry with them the risk of exchanges (critical losses for the Germans), and second because Russian retreats allow the unit to live and fight again, whereas simple isolation can decimate the Russian forces without much risk of German loss. Simple, did I say? Against a clever Russian player isolation will not be that easy.

The Russian gets a relatively easy time of it; he must be on his guard against isolation, particularly in the second impulse (difficult to plan for), but on the whole all he needs to do is to wait for the German to kill himself on the Russian bayonets.



All in all the poor German gets a hard time of it, but that's how life was, and we can't fault the game on this account. Indeed, we can't really fault it at all; we found it most interesting to play. It has the advantage of taking but a short time to play, a factor which busy players will recognise as advantageous.

Summary.

We recommend the game highly.

Our only reservation concerns the victory conditions; most players like to play to a definite result, after all, even if it is only called a 'marginal victory' or whatever. It should be a relatively simple matter for some sage to invent (perhaps) a points system, and we at ALBION would be pleased to print such a system were anyone to offer us one for us to publish.

Get this game - you will enjoy it.

Suitability for postal play.

You will need a postal grid system, as below. However there should be no difficulty in playing the game by mail. As in the face-to-face game, a careful check should be kept on which railroads are in the control of each side, so that no arguments as to the state of supply of a unit arise. However the Battle Of Moscow will be an interesting postal game, and one which will perhaps become a popular alternative to the longer Stalingrad and Barbarossa.

Postal Grid System.

Letters A-XX along the east edge, starting in the north.

Numbers 1-57 running diagonally north-west to south-east, starting in the north-east.

Check points:	Leningrad is D26.	Moscow is BB27.
	Smolensk is CC41.	Gomel is MM51.
	Kursk is TT41.	

\* \* \* \* \*

And while we are talking about new games, another one has come to our attention recently. This is Sicily, a Drumco product, which is intended as a preliminary to the Avalon Hill Anzio. We hope that this game will be the subject of a report in ALBION in the near future. However, in the meantime, here is a postal grid system which we recommend should be adopted for the game.

Letters A-CC along the north edge.

Numbers 1-26 running diagonally south-west to north-east, starting in the north-west.

Check points:	Palermo is I4.	Messina is CC13 (and a bit of CC14).
	Catania is Y18.	Syracuse is AA23.

\* \* \* \* \*

IT COULD ONLY HAPPEN IN ENGLAND.

Part 4.    Decimals and Other Animals.

Britain has gone Decimal!

As William Rushton once remarked on T.V. - "I had enough trouble with s and d; now I'm up to my neck in p". As only he could say it.

Gone for ever is the ridiculous quasi-psychology that makes retailers put £4.19-11 on price tickets instead of £5. Gone for ever are the tedious multiplication tables '12 pence make one shilling; 20 shillings make one pound'. Gone for the ever are slang names - the tanner, the bob, the half-crown (or half-dollar, reminding us of those halcyon days before two devaluations came along). Gone for ever is the nuisance of messing about with hideous gross copper coins; we no longer have to remember that the smallest (the 3d piece) is worth the most, the largest (the penny) is worth the middle amount, and the middle-sized one (the halfpenny) is worth the least. We leave all this with the Americans, who still persist on thinking that the 10¢ coin should be smaller in size than the 5¢.

Now Britain and the Empire strides into the New Age. The Empire? Hmmm. It was there a minute ago.....

We stride into the New Age later than most, we admit, but then Britain has never been a nation to jump into things without considering them carefully first (in this case for around 70 years).

We now have 100 'new' pennies to the pound, the pound itself remaining inviolate. In other words we can still call it a quid. Though how much it's actually worth is something else again.

We now get our sums wrong in numbers base 10 rather than in numbers base 12. We now have the quasi-psychology that makes retailers put £4.99 on price tickets instead of £5. We have new multiplication tables which are so simple that no-one seems able to remember them. We now have the nuisance of messing about with new bronze coins; at least their ascending values correspond to their ascending sizes.

As an added bonus, having got rid of the halfpenny some time ago, we now have it back, in the shape of a coin so small that it will easily loss itself in the recesses of a pocket. The new  $\frac{1}{2}$ p is also so insignificant in value that the banks consider it beneath their dignity even to recognise, thus ensuring its early demise. In other words, before very long the smallest item of negotiable currency will be the 'new penny', which is 2.4 of the old ones. How's that for stopping inflation? As a means of increasing prices all round without anyons noticing it's been a great idea.

Still, that's the price we pay for advancing into the New Age.

Note also the crafty way in which the Decimal Currency Board, demonstrating all the qualities of good Socialism, have removed the guinea from our midst, thereby ensuring that no-ones can charge a so-called professional fee, and giving the auctioneers of rare works of art a terrible time. I suppose we could say that the 'new guinea' is £1-10. No-one would notice.

There are snags, of course. Public officials seem constitutionally incapable of adding up in numbers base 10, when before D Day they were adding up wrong in base 12 and base 20 simultaneously, with apparent ease. The Post Office in particular has been hit by this disease since they chose a bad moment to strike. When they eventually condescended to go back to work (for a pay offer approximating to the one they had refused as ridiculous seven weeks before) they found that everyone else had gone decimal when they weren't looking. When the February ALBION was mailed, in mid-March, it took close to 30 minutes to buy the stamps. When the idiot girl had got the sum wrong three times running, I had to give her some personal, private, tuition. Very private. We editors have to have our fun like everyone else, you know.

People in general have quite a job comparing prices in new money with prices for the same articles in old money. Most have given up trying, since they know prices have risen anyway. To divide a number by 2.4 in your head is no mean feat. Normally, you just cough up, then swear when you get home and find out how much you have generously donated to the Interests Of Progress.

Mathematics teachers have, for centuries, been telling their pupils never to mix fractions and decimals in the same number. Some pupils, when first confronted with decimals, tend to write  $1.2\frac{1}{2}$  instead of 1.25, for instance. When pupils make this sort of error, they are kindly corrected by their gentle humane teacher, usually by caning them to within an inch of their lives. Now, after all these years, we have, not a recalcitrant pupil, but an entire Government disobeying our instruction. When we now write the sum 'three pounds, twelve and a half new pence' we are told to write £3.12 $\frac{1}{2}$ . So much for mathematics teachers. Oh well - who's worried? The  $\frac{1}{2}$ p won't last long anyway.

Everyone in the country will, no doubt, get used to the new system, and forget that 'old pence' ever existed. Except one. Me. You see, the old penny was the exact equivalent of the U.S. cent, which made my monthly conversion from £sd to \$/ quite easy. Now I have to convert new pence back into old pence when doing the overseas financial records for ALBION. Which provides a good advance excuse for getting overseas credits wrong in future lists.....

Back to the superb Post Office, who have ridden magnificently on the crest of the Decimal Wave. In addition to ensuring that bills are added up wrong, they have chosen this moment to re-price postage stamps and the costs of mailing things from here to - eventually - there. Not a bad idea, you might say. Well, I agree in general, but there are one or two sneaky changes which don't come to the eye immediately.

For one thing, overseas rates haven't changed. The old airletter form can still be used, either pre-printed with the 9d stamp, or by sticking a 9d stamp on. Really? Well, you can't get 9d stamps. What, then, happens to the dozens of unstamped airletter forms such as I have in my desk? Answer - you convert 9d into p; it won't convert exactly, so you use stamps worth 4p. Which are worth 9.6 old pence. What's happened to the so-called equality?

Here's another one. I had just discovered, prior to the commencement of decimal currency, that ALBION qualified as a 'newspaper or similar publication' within the British Isles, so that it could be mailed cheaply under the heading 'printed matter' yet still take the same time for delivery. Now the requirements for printed matter mailing are more restrictive. You can mail printed matter at the second class rate, yet get first class service (whatever that means) providing you register your periodical with the Post Office. This costs a mere £1 per issue. So you have to send out 200 copies of each issue to break even. Not only that, but most postmen, on seeing a second class stamp, will generally drop the envelope in question into the bag marked 'Delay Indefinitely' without looking to see whether the words 'printed matter' are displayed in the opposite corner.

So ALBION will be mailed first class from now on. Sorry 'bout that.

So, we have changed to decimal currency. Soon we will lose feet and inches and get metres instead. Pounds (weight) will shortly give way to kilograms and tons to tonnes (that will cause some shambles). Perhaps even pints will disappear (perish the thought!) and be replaced by litres.

Even the date is being changed. When we write March 21st 1971 nowadays, we write 21/3/71. To add to the confusion, the Americans write 3/21/71. Now we are being told to write it 71/3/21. Or 71/21/3 - I'm not sure. Anyway, there's another example of 'with it' Britain.

Despite all this, we apparently remain unmoved by the biggest non-decimal fraud in the world - time. Eventually, when the public is counting everything in scale 10, it would be wrong to expect them to count in 24s and 60s when telling the time.

Why 60? Well, apparently, some years ago (around 3,000, as far as I can remember) some disorganised non-British pagans - the Babylonians, I think - counted in 6s and 60s, for reasons best known to themselves. Hence 60 seconds in one minute, 60 minutes in one hour. Also 360 degrees (6x60 - get it?) in a complete turn.

Why 24 hours in a day? Well, if you arbitrarily decide to count in 60s, you can't expect the universe to go along with your whim and allow 60 (or even 6) hours in a day, can you? We could, of course, have four times the present number of days in a year, so that a day could be 6 hours long. The numbers might then be a bit more logical, but the English licensing laws would take a helluva beating. We would also lose national dates, like November 5th, which wouldn't do at all.

No - we have to keep 24 hours in a day, since that's the Way Things Are. However it's high time we came to grips with the 60 business.

The only solution, of course, is the ALBION International Decimal Clock. You are in the privileged position of being the first members of the general public to read of this revolutionary (yes - the hands still go round) new development, the likes of which you have never seen the likes of before, and which is the most remarkable contribution to the Science of Numbers and the Cause of Decimalisation of Everything.

Here's how it works. The days remain the same. However each day is divided into 100 hours, each hour having 100 minutes. We won't bother with seconds - with the increased demands on our time these days it won't be long before the second, like the new British  $\frac{1}{2}$ p, eventually disappears.

The day starts round about 7.30 a.m. for most people, which would be 31.25 New Time (31 new hours, 25 new minutes - right?). Lunch will be eaten at about 53.00 and the evening date will start at 68.75 or thereabouts, depending on whether she turns up on time or not. Sleep is a variable quantity, but for myself, who never goes to bed later than 10.00 p.m. old time (on the very good assumption - as yet unproved - that it will make me healthy, wealthy and wise), bedtime will be at 91.67 prompt.

We are confident that the idea will catch on and will obtain immediate support from other ~~idiot~~ savants like the author. We will, of course, have to get used to New Time, and ALBION generously appends a list of things you might want to remember, in the form of a daily diary of a typical boring British businessman, living in suburbia with his wife and family.

First, make sure your breakfast egg is boiled for exactly 20.7 new minutes. Dress, kiss the aspidistra goodbye, then run a 27.7 new minute mile to work. Check your watch - did British Summertime start today? If so, put your watch forward 4.25 new hours. Or back - no-one ever remembers which.

At mid-morning, after the first rush is over, have your secretary bring you 46.75ses. Talk to her about your favourite films - High Fifty, for instance, or Round The World In 8160 New Hours.

Lunchtime, and the chance of gossip with the rest of the staff. Eat a 6.94-new-minute steak. Take your time - the lunch-hour is now  $4\frac{1}{4}$  new hours long.

Somehow you must struggle through the afterfifty, finally wending your weary way home.

Don't forget that your small son goes to bed at 80.75. Tuck him up and ready yourself for the nursery rhyme.

'Hickory Dickory Dock; the mouse ran up the new clock;  
The clock struck 55.25, the mouse ran down;  
Hickory Dickory Dock'.

The evening is now all yours. They are repeating some old comedy programmes on the radio - Hancock's Two-And-An-Eighth was always a favourite of yours, so be sure not to miss it. And then News At 91.67 on the T.V.

Bedtime, and the requirement that you get a full 34 hours sleep. And try not to dream about Hypertweedle.....

\* \* \* \* \*



(from Fred Davis, continued).

I understand that Charles Wells' Parlement is being played in some university's political science classes, and that it is possible that some political science classes may be playing Diplomacy before too long. Perhaps you could ask anyone who knows about such college-level games to send you a report on their progress and/or outcome.

I hope you have some luck in getting Abstraction launched. Something came up in Rod Walker's game 'Ac. I' which required a special ruling. Seems one player tried to move his army from Greece into the Ionian Sea to board a fleet before said fleet had arrived there. The ruling was that this was an illegal move, since all boardings of fleets by armies are deemed to occur at the beginning of a move.

100 Years Later.

PRESS RELEASE. Baltimore, Maryland (Davis Free Press).

After an unprecedented period of blackout, serious doubts were raised here today about the continued existence of Great Britain. Many experts on the matter, including officials of the Avalon Hill Corporation, have concluded that Britain sank under the waves sometime around the middle of January 1971 and will never be heard from again. American oil interests have proposed renting that portion of the North Sea where Britain used to be, in hopes of doing some offshore drilling similar to that done along the Texas coast. "Even if we don't find new oil, we might at least find their storage tanks still intact" was the way one Texan oil millionaire put it. Also, skin-divers' associations are planning an expedition to see if they can find the top of London's Post Office Tower.

However, other sources continue to hold that Britain is still out there somewhere, if we could only find it. Strong evidence of the existence of the English continued to come from the Irish Republic, where empty Johnny Jameison bottles, filled with petrol and labelled 'Down With England', continue to be tossed back and forth along the border. Also, empty Scotch bottles continue to drift down to the seas from the site of the British Isles, indicating that someone, or something, is still alive in the region. A great peace has settled over the world during this blackout period, as at least 5 great wars formerly chronicled in the sacred pages of ALBION have come to a halt. The munitions makers and their stockholders are very unhappy over this turn of events. One U.S. manufacturer of combat aircraft stated that unless this disaster can be overcome, his firm might be forced to turn to the construction of frivolous objects like schoolhouses, hospitals and homes for the poor.

March 7th.

ALBION 25 arrived here a few days ago. It must have been in the last mail-bag to leave England. Thank you for reprinting the rules of Abstraction. I will be very interested in learning whether you obtained a full board to play the game, once communications are open again.

Your friend, Fred.

\*\*\*I should point out that the above paragraphs were extracted from a long letter which Fred started on January 23rd and added to, from time to time, while waiting for the mails to re-open again. Also that Fred included some questions on The Flight Of The

Goeben (Strategic) which are printed, and answered, later in this issue.

As usual, Fred's comments are both pertinent and good sense. It might be coincidence, but it seems to me that many people who play games only to win, and take them with funereal seriousness, are just the people who change hobbies with a deft flick of the wrist when first confronted with an opponent who a) is beating them, and b) has the cheek not to take his victory seriously. I doubt if Parlement has reached British universities; however if any reader has information on such college-level games as Fred mentions, I would be glad to hear it and print it.

As for Abstraction, the game is filling up nicely now. See the games waiting lists later this issue. djt\*\*\*

From David Karfoot, 9 Mountbarrow Road, Ulverston, Lancs.

Dear Don,

Because of the postal strike, my arrangements to go to the U.S.A. this summer have fallen through, and so I feel able to enter the U.K. Abstraction game. I have one or two queries, though.

1. What are the constituent provinces of Turkey?
2. At certain places, e.g. a)Zur,Tyr,Pie,Ven, b)Lor,Ruh,Swa,Bur, c)Mun,Vie, Boh,Tyr, four areas appear to meet at one point. What is the movement aspect between such areas? I.E. could you move Zur-Ven?

Best regards, David.

\*\*\*In answer to the questions in order:

1. Turkey consists of the provinces Con,Sin,Smy,Cic, Arm,Dam,Mes and Pal. Supply centres are Con,Sin, Smy and Dam.
2. Seems like the map has been badly printed in some areas. Taking the examples David gives in order,  
a) movement directly between Zur and Ven is not possible, although movement directly between Tyr and Pie is quite legal.  
b) movement directly between Ruh and Bur, and between Lor and Swa, is quite legal. In this case the boundaries do meet at a point in the original map sent to me by Fred.  
c) movement directly between Mun and Vie is not possible, although movement between Boh and Tyr is quite legal.

I think the best thing would be to make a general ruling on such situations, where boundaries aren't fully clear. When the boundaries of four countries meet at a point (as is the case with Lor,Ruh,Swa,Bur - I think the only case) movement from one province direct to any other is legal. In all other cases, two of the provinces are not adjacent, and movement between them illegal. djt\*\*\*



Questions and Answers on The Flight Of The Goeben (S&T game).

(From Fred Davis, address in the letter column).

1. Why does the Strategic game furnish markers for the First and Second British cruiser squadrons for the 4 old armoured cruisers, while the game also gives us complete separate markers for all 4 of these ships? One gains the impression from the S&T rules that all 4 of these ships are part of the British fleet at Malta, yet there are no damage report boxes for these 4 ships, although there are boxes to report the damage for the 4 small light cruisers, each of which has an individual marker. So my basic question is whether or not one uses the Warrior, Black Prince etc. in the basic game, and, if so, does one use them as separate ships or as the First and Second cruiser squadrons, with 2 ships per squadron as shown on the first page of the rules, as given on the markers.
2. What is the status of the French fleet after the Transports are brought to Marseilles by escort units 1, 2 and 3? I have decided in my game to add the rule that once the transports have arrived in Marseilles, the real units of the French fleet can be used.
3. Did you notice the discrepancy between the rules, which state that British and German ships cannot start firing at each other until 1500 5 August, while the time chart shows they may open fire at 0300 August 5th? Since they went to war at 2400 on August 4th, I'm using the 0300 open fire turn in my rules.

Answers.

1. The confusion is explained in S&T issue 22, hidden away somewhere in the Outgoing Mail section. When the hit records were printed, the hit record boxes for the British cruiser squadrons were omitted. S&T say that players should use the French cruiser squadron boxes for the British cruisers as well, since they are the same format (2 ships @ 2 points per squadron).
2. I would agree with Fred's ruling here, however, since the 19th Corps takes such a time to get to Marseilles, the actual French units which would be released on arrival won't be a lot of use to the Allied player unless Goeben happens to be in the vicinity. This applies only to the basic game, of course, since in the advanced games the actual French units are used, rather than the Convoy Escort counters. However a French Fleet SDR of 1 or 2 still restricts the use of the French fleet to the Western Med., only rolls of 3,4,5 or 6 allowing them to be really useful (and the extra cruisers are a real bonus for the Allied player).
3. I am sure the 0300 turn is the correct one, and have always played the game this way. To be honest, I hadn't noticed that the actual rules contain the contradictory statement. Perhaps the situation got confused with the time the Italians can open fire if they enter the war in the advanced game.

Comments from S&T, particularly from Dave Williams, on the above would be much appreciated.

Trades and Subscriber List - additions.

Please add the following. Note that one new subscriber replaces Larry Fong in the list at number 20; if Larry ever emerges from wherever he is, and pays his debts, he can start again at the foot of the list.

- 20. Mike Malone, 10520 SE 220th, Kent, Washington 98031, U.S.A.  
S.
- 60. W.E.Mell, 21 Wheathouse Terrace, Birkby, Huddersfield HD2 2UY.  
S. (32)
- 61. Walter Buchanan, Rt 3, Lebanon, Indiana 46052, U.S.A.  
S.

Games Waiting Lists.

- Seven Country Game: Edi Birsan (U.S.A.); Mike Monahan (Canada);  
Ray Evans (U.K.); Bernie Ackerman (South Africa).
- International Games: Jim Boskey, Buddy Tretick, Ian Livingstone, Dave  
Taylor, Greg Tully.
- Abstraction (UK only): John Robertson, Jeremy Elsmore, Bob Stuart, Ian  
Livingstone, Stephen Cruse, David Karfoot, Dave  
Taylor.

BINGO! We have a game. See later.

- Abstraction (anyone): Bernie Ackerman (?).
- UK-only regular games: Adrian Brine, Colin Bradbury, Ian Livingstone, Dave  
Taylor.

ALBION ANNOUNCES A NEW GAME!

The U.K. Abstraction gets off the ground. Your gamesmaster has drawn lots for the countries, and we have come up with the following game list:-

- Austria: John Robertson, Upper Dunglass, Arbroath Road, Broughty Ferry,  
Dundee DD5 1QN.
- England: Ian Livingstone, 109 Shaftesbury Avenue, Timperley, Cheshire.
- France: Stephen Cruse, 119 Gravel Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire.
- Germany: David Taylor, 171 Lodge Lane, Hyde, Cheshire.
- Italy: Jeremy Elsmore, 3 The Gorse, Tabley Road, Knutsford, Cheshire.
- Russia: Bob Stuart, 3 Millwood Road, Orpington, Kent.
- Turkey: David Karfoot, 9 Mountbarrow Road, Ulverston, Lancs.

Gamesmaster: Don Turnbull. You continue to suffer.....

What a line-up, with four players from Cheshire! Actually, Hyde and Knutsford are quite some distance apart, although Timperley and Wilmslow lie in between.

The game will be known as ALBION 71/1V (don't forget the V to avoid any confusion) until Rod Walker assigns a Boardman number. Please, Rod. Reports will appear in every issue of COURIER, and press releases will be welcomed as usual.

The game fee will be £1, since this game is likely to take longer than a normal regular game.

P.T.O. for further details.

Abstraction game continued.

Players should now consult the rules of the game which were printed in ALBION 25. Note that the first set of orders, after the variable starting positions, will be for July 1914. Prior to this, however, time must be allowed for players to negotiate with each other, not only about the usual things like 'who to stab first' but also about the starting positions - see page 3 of ALBION 25. Note also that Austria will start with an army in Tyr instead of Bud, although Bud is the normal supply centre for future builds.

All these negotiations for initial starting positions must be over by:

TUESDAY APRIL 20TH 1971.

This is the deadline for starting positions only, not for the July 1914 orders.

And the best of luck to you all! You need it, with me adjudicating.....

Game Deadlines should now be back to normal; see the next COURIER, which with any luck should already have reached you. Which means it's not the next ..... oh well.

There are openings in LA GUERRE for regular Diplomacy players, Buddy Tretick, the editor, asks me to announce. Anyone interested please write to Buddy at 3702 Wendy Lane, Silver Spring, Maryland 20906, U.S.A.

FLASH! The Next Avalon Hill Game.

To be released April 1st - LUFTHAFTE, a game based on the Allied air offensive against Germany in the years 1943-45.

Speaking as a frustrated would-be owner of the last new one, PanzerBlitz, I wonder how long my copy of Luftwaffe will take to arrive.....

In The Next ALBION.

Michael Nethercot continues his series 'The Drawing Board'.

Tony Jones and Bob Stuart comment on their initial reactions to PanzerBlitz and on play-by-mail possibilities.

And More!

Please note that I am still interested in articles on wargaming, general gaming etc. The sooner they reach me, the better. However, please don't write articles on subjects which are already comprehensively documented in books; an article on chess, for instance, would have to be pretty original, whereas any article on, say, Anzio is grist to the ALBION mills.

Hope you enjoyed the Spring ALBION. See you on the ice.

Walcome back, everyone! What s dismal (but pesceful) timethis has been, with no lattars for close on seven weeks! Margaret welcomed the new energy which was suddenly devoted to decorating etc., and was seen to have a very atern word with Tom Jackson when the latter decided to send everyone back to work.

Since that date the lettere (and phone calls) have been coming in with renewad frequency, and my study has returned to its former chaotic state. Anyway, I hope you have all eurvived and had a well-deserved rest. Although this should be a happy time, with a return to our hobby plus April the first to boot, it seems that I have a long list of apologies to maka. Without doubt the most important concerns.....

### The Regional Meeting.

I printed the last bulletin on or around February 1st, during the postal strike. At that tima wa had little idea of how long it was going to last, snd it seemed reasonable to assume that, when the strike was over, there would be ample time for arrangements to be made for the meeting. Hence there seemed no reason why the bulletin as printed should not remain in the envelopes.

As the strike added week onto week, however, it becsme mora and more clear that, when the thing finished, there would be so little time before the date of the proposed maeting that arrangements could not ba finalised; taking into account not only our own circumstances (negotiating with the family to be away for a weekand, with little prior warning, booking hotel rooms, circulating details of routes etc. etc.) but also the fact that, when the mail did start to run, they would require a few days at least to get to tha stage whan delivery would be raasonably short. As it turned out, thrae daya elapsed between the strika ending snd the local post offica accepting the pile of envelopes I had. This made the maeting only ten days from tha day I mailed the noticaa.

During tha time of the strike I had been in touch with various members on tha phona, and they tended to agree that, unlesa the strike gava a clear thrae waeks or more for arrangements to be made, we just couldn't expect to hold a meeting as normal. Since some members were in direct contact with others, it seemed reasonable to assume that the word would get round.

Anyway, whether you subscribe to the above reasoning or not, my imbacility knew no bounds when, of all tha people I should have talked to about the matter, I somehow aesumed that Harry Tucker, who wss to be the host, would somehow resd my mind. Thue it wasn't until I got a latter from Harry, a few days before the meeting date, that it dawned on me ha was axpecting us as normal. I wrote back immediately, explsining what happened, but of course by then it was too late. Harry's lettat said that two membars had already indicatad to him that they were coming. Most others in the region aithar assumed there would be no meeting, or couldn't make arrangements in the short time left.

Well, there it is - I'm afraid I have complatly wrecked the whole business, and I can't think of suitable words with which to apologise to those who have been inconvenienced, particularly to Harry. I can try to rationalise until I'm blue in the face, but it won't alter the fact that I wrecked the whole idaa of the meeting - potentially another happy and enjoyable gathering of the region.

Bulletin 23 Page 2.

I hope that members will accept my sincere apologies for my actions in this. Beyond that I can add no more.

Now here's another apology.

Regional Director.

Please read the attached notice, which is circulated only to AHIKS members.

Members - General.

I have been in touch with quite a few members during the strike, and I thought the region would be interested to hear.

David Wood emerged from his nuptial dream-world a few weeks ago, and was seen to be alive and well, and still keen on wargaming. David, Malcolm, Ivor Moseley and I, with our respective spouses, had a very pleasant evening at a nearby club a couple of weeks ago.

Dave Taylor (new member last bulletin) dropped over from Hyde to see me one Sunday. Apart from examining all the games, Dave turns out to be a keen Diplomacy fan, and signed up for a few ALBION games. Dave met Ian Livingstone while with us; Ian is a local wargamer who at present is nibbling at the bait and who will be joining us soon.

Ian Erskine phoned me one night, saying he was in Manchester for the week, and could we meet. So one evening we had Ian Erskine (Ireland), Malcolm (Scotland - need I remind you?), and Ian Livingstone and myself (England) sitting round a table of beer glasses. One would expect a spate of the old jokes about the Englishman, Irishman and Scotsman walking down Broadway.

But let it never be said.....In fact, everything went with a swing, and I was only sorry that Ian couldn't come along for another evening.

Dave Bell stayed with Michael Nethercot for three days in January, then with us for another three. Dave was en route from Liberiato Texas, and paused to examine the fabled British Region in action.

I also spent a day with John Poole in sunny Dyserth recently; we played Battle of Moscow, and at the end my Germans were down to two or three units, and only one city in Russia was German-held. Still, it was his house, after all.....

Malcolm Watson will be joining the ranks of the married men in August, by the way. Which gives us time to decide what type of bomb to buy him for a wedding present.

At various times I have also spoken on the phone with Michael Nethercot, John Robertson, Eric Slack and Tony Jones. Oh yes, and Bob Stuart, who rang up just before the postal strike started just to tell me that his copy of Panzer Blitz had arrived; I considered this a grave affront, since mine hadn't at that time reached me (and still hasn't!), and the line was blue with my wails. Later I discovered that Tony Jones had also got his copy, so these two, at least, had something to do while the mail ran dry for the rest of us.

Enough of chatter, and down to business. Still, it's nice to see people in the region during periods of such difficulty, and to know that they, too, are trying vainly to combat their wives' attempts to cure them of wargaming.

More news over.

The Colonel's Corner - by Henry Radice.

I am starting the column by breaking a New Year Resolution, by moving away from the year 1914 for my first recommendation. A number of members at the last regional meeting said that they knew nothing of the First World War. For those who want to get background knowledge I recommend very strongly:

The First World War by Cyril Falls. Longmans 1960 42/- and 1964 21/-.

Cyril Falls fought in that war and has spent 20 years in its study. He is a well-known military historian of the Fuller, Liddell Hart era, and in my opinion (and in Oxford University's, who awarded him the chair of Military History) their superior. His aim is to show what that war meant to his generation and to record what his contemporaries felt, and in what spirit they fought. He has achieved a condensed but readable history of The Great War, which includes accounts of all the campaigns and battles year by year. He gives a picture of the main commanders and he includes incidents both grave and gay which show the spirit of the combatants. He reminds us of a number of facts about all the participants which are often forgotten. 400-odd pages, 25 maps and 34 fine photographs go to produce what one reviewer calls a 'masterpiece of its kind'. Available second-hand for about 18/-, it is very strongly recommended.

The Schlieffen Plan by Gerhard Ritter. Oswald Wolff. 1958 30/- and Riband (paperback) 18/-.

General von Schlieffen was Chief of the German General Staff from 1891-1905 and was the author of the war plan, modified by his successor von Moltke, for the invasion of France. Translated from the German, the book is a thorough assessment of the plan. It includes the complete text of the plan and Moltke's alterations. As is well known the plan disregarded the political repercussions and all morality in regard to treaties and the rights of neutrals. An interesting book, but may prove a little heavy for the general reader. Good basic reading for an understanding of the campaign.

The British Army of 1914. by Maj. R. Money Barnes. Seale Service 50/-.

A somewhat superficial book for the general reader. The best feature is the author's own illustrations. It contains chapters on the evolution of the British army up to 1914, its organisation and deployment at the outbreak of war, accounts of allied and enemy armies (which are too short to be of much value) and two rather highly-coloured chapters on the exploits of the BEF in the first two months of the war. At 50/- it is not recommended as a 'buy', but would be quite useful background library reading of a very general nature.

Death Of An Army - The First Battle of Ypres by Anthony Farrar-Hockley. Arthur Barker 1967 30/- and Pan Books (paperback) 6/-.

The author, about whom I have written before, has recently been promoted to Maj-Gen and is GOC Land Forces Northern Ireland - a real hot seat! Ypres, with the Menin Gate and road, through and along which so many thousands made their last earthly journey to the Salient, is hallowed ground for the British Army. The famous gate has been rebuilt as a

memorial, with the names of those with no known grave inscribed upon it, and even today, over half a century later, the Belgian Fire Service sound the Last Post and Reveille each night at the Menin Gate. I do not believe any Englishman standing there can fail to be moved.

The battle marked the last effort of the German army to outflank the Allies and win the war in 1914. It was an encounter battle, the last on the Western Front, and was a definite defensive victory for the Allies. It has come to be regarded as a British battle chiefly because, in the words of the official historian, 'the old British regular army was gone past recall'. However both the French and Belgians played their parts and Foch was in overall command of the operations. The author brings this out well. The book is short - 180-odd pages with 12 maps and 22 illustrations. It is available for about 12/6 in second-hand bookshops. The book is sound, accurate and takes in the whole battlefield on both sides of Ypres. Although criticised for a lack of warmth by one reviewer his final paragraph, in which he gives the reasons why the Salient was held so obstinately after the Germans had captured all ground of tactical significance, shows a soldier's appreciation of the spiritual and moral values which play so large a part in battle. Second-hand a very good bargain - strongly recommended.

The Vanished Army - B.E.F. 1914/15 by Tim Carew. Kimber 1964. 36/-

I know nothing of this book. It is probably similar to *Death Of An Army*. It will be eminently readable, racy in style and probably somewhat inaccurate in detail. Recommended for library reading only.

Tannenberg by Sir Edmund Ironside. Blackwood 1925. 15/-

Unfortunately this excellent book is out of print, and so libraries and second-hand bookshops must be resorted to. It gives a clear, accurate and readable picture of the first month of the war in East Prussia, covering its invasion by the Russians, their defeat and the subsequent advance of the Germans. There are three main campaign maps and eleven good sketch maps of the details. The author covers the initiation of the campaign, the opposing forces, the Russian plan and advance, the battles and the lessons learnt. There is also a chapter on the naval situation. The scale ranges from Army to Brigade level; the narrative is clear and readable. A very worthwhile book on a very important campaign but one whose details are little known in this country.

The Swordbearers by Corelli Barnett. Eyre and Spottiswoode 1963 35/- and Penguin 1966 8/6.

This book, containing four studies in Supreme Command in the First World War, has only one section - that on Moltke - strictly relevant to these reviews. It is much as one expects from this author - forthright criticism, little praise, clear accounts of battles and a penchant for searching for social causes for failure. An uneven book, hardly worth buying, but gives a useful picture of the German Chief of Staff at the beginning of the Great War.

Finally three books of which I know nothing.

*The Battle of the Marne*, by Henri Isselin. Elek 1965 42/-.

*My Seventy-Five - Journal of a French Gunner*. Tandem 1968 5/-.

*The Advance From Mons 1914* by Walter Bloem. Tandem 1965. 3/6.

Henry Radice.

New Members.

We welcome two more new members to the region this month. Nice to see that the postal strike has not made any difference to the growth of the hobby in England (and elsewhere).

1. Ivan Nilsson, Vengaten 1D, 261 39 Landskrona, Sweden.

Like Harald Sonesson (new member in February) Ivan is a member of the Scandanavian Wargamea Society, anxious to meet foreign opponents and establish international relations.

Ivan had the frustrating experience of writing to me just before the end of 1970, only to have no reply. Apparently my reply got lost somewhere, and then the postal strike intervened; hence Ivan should really have been a member since January or February, had things gone right. Anyway, we have finally established contact again.

2. T.P.Rogera, 50 A.M.Q., St. Eval, Wadebridge, Cornwall.

Mr. Rogers - sorry to be formal, but I don't know that the initials stand for yet - joins Chris Hall in the Cornish branch of AHIKS British Region. My geography is rather vague, but I recall that Wadebridge isn't far from Newquay (right?) which itself isn't far from Truro. Perhaps there's a chance of face-to-face games.

Mr. Rogers got to know about AHIKS via ALBION, which proves that this lamentable magazine serves at least some small function.

We are very pleased to welcome our two newest members, and hope they enjoy their membership and the games. Game assignments for them, and others, can be found in the opponents wanted section later.

Opponents Wanted.

I have re-advertised the requests from last time, in case the postal strike prevented things from getting started. This leaves me with quite a large column this time.

Harald Sonesson; I'm afraid I still don't know what game(s) Harald wishes to play. However perhaps he will be able to choose an opponent from the list below.

Dave Taylor; I think Dave and Chris Hall have got a Stalingrad fixed up now; if not, please let me know and I will re-advertise.

Ivan Nilsson; wants games of Stalingrad and/or D Day. Also a postal chess game, if anyone is interested. Richard? Rene?

Rene Nokin; has just become the proud owner of Anzio Beachhead, and wants to try it postally. Any offers?

T.P.Rogera; wants to start with a Waterloo game.

Michael Nethercot: is the third member of the region to get PanzerBlitz before mine has arrived. He would like to try a postal game.

Bob Johnson (Eastern Region, U.S.A.): wants a Bulge game against a member in the region - offers?

Note, particularly for new members;

If you want to reply to an advertisement in this column, you should first write to the potential opponent to determine ideas, rules etc. At the same time one of you should write to David Wood, informing him of the assignment and asking for an idler for the game.



### Strategy and Tactics.

It is reported that ~~Poultron~~ Poultron Press are alive and well, and living in New York.

A few days ago I had a letter from Art Lasky, who is now handling the British side of the business. He said that a large package had been mailed to me a few days before, containing all the back issues of S&T, and all the Test Series Games, that we have been waiting for since ..... round September for the most delayed items, I suppose.

It seems, therefore, that I will have some goods for you in the next few weeks, depending on the speed of delivery of this package; I might also be able to tell you how much various things from Poultron cost under the new agency arrangements.

Issue 25 of S&T should be on its way, and 26 is due out soon. Keep hoping - the end is in sight after all this time!

### Membership Dues.

The postal strike really botched up the receipt of annual dues etc. Many members have already sent me cash etc., but one or two still owe. If you haven't yet paid me the £6 (£2-50) membership fee for the year, please would you straighten the matter out? It will help my records etc.

### Another apology.

In the last bulletin I tried to print some photos of the last regional meeting. With little success, as you will already have seen. My apologies for this - no idea what happened, but something clearly went wrong in the works. I hope that future efforts are not as bad, otherwise I will have to think about stopping printing photos, which would be a pity.

### Cranwell House Developments.

Michael Nethercot wrote me a huge letter just after the strike. He, at least, has found plenty to do while the strike lasted.

CHD are nearly ready to offer their first game for sale. This is called SCHWEINFURT, a game on the famous raid on the ball-bearing factories. The designer is none other than our own Tony Jones, who has been working on this game for quite some time, to my certain knowledge.

Michael says that he is now accepting advance orders for copies of the game, which will be priced at £1.25 or thereabouts. Purchasers are asked to order BUT DON'T SEND MONEY YET, since Michael will send you an invoice when the game is ready to go out. Please write to Michael at Cranwell House Developments, 102 High Street, Ingatestone, Essex. The game format is approximately the same as the S&T Test Series Games - unmounted map etc. Good value, I reckon.

By the way, this is the last Cranwell House announcement I will make in the bulletin on Michael's behalf. No, he hasn't insulted me, nor I him (as far as I know....) but in future he will be advertising in ALBION, and making a better job of it than I could possibly do.

Finally that seems to be all for now. My sincere apologies for all the chaos I have caused in the last few months, and for any shortcomings in this missive. Best wishes to everyone, and please read the enclosed supplementary sheet.

Don Turnbull, 6 St. George's Avenue, Timperley, Cheshire, England.



THIS WOULD NOT BE A PROBLEM, IF IT WERE.